



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

JULY 28, 2005

Approved Meeting Minutes

Commissioners in Attendance: Jerry Finrow, Vice-Chair, George Blomberg, Mahlon Clements, Tom Eanes, Chris Fiori, Valerie Kinast, John Owen, Joe Quintana, Mimi Sheridan

Commissioners Absent: Steve Sheehy, Chair, Hilda Blanco, Martin Kaplan, Lyn Krizanich, Tony To

Commission Staff: Barbara Wilson, Director; Scott Dvorak, Planning Analyst

Guests: Tom Hauger, Department of Planning and Development; Rebecca Herzfeld, Council Central Staff; Ben Farrow, Get Engaged Candidate

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 a.m. by Vice-Chair Jerry Finrow. Mr. Finrow noted that Chair Sheehy is unable to attend today's meeting therefore he would be acting as chair.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

Approval of July 14, 2005 Minutes

Commissioner Tom Eanes moved and Commissioner Chris Fiori seconded that the July 14th minutes be approved. Commissioner Eanes pointed out a typo that will be fixed in the approved minutes. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Chair & Staff Report

▪ Schedule & Housekeeping Updates

Vice-Chair Jerry Finrow opened the meeting with schedule and housekeeping updates. He reminded the Commissioners that there will be no full Commission or committee meetings in the month of August noting that the next meeting of the Executive Committee will take place on September 6th and the next full Commission meeting is September 8th. He also noted that during the month of August, staff will continue working and an ad hoc meeting or two may be necessary. Vice Chair Finrow noted that Chair Steve Sheehy called for a Commission meeting in August – it will be after work hours, with no agenda but to get together and socialize. The likely date will be August 11th.

Vice Chair Finrow noted that Commission assistant Robin Magonegil had back surgery on July 19th. She will likely be out through the month of August. We have a card for people to sign which we will circulate. He also noted that Executive Director Barbara Wilson will be out on vacation from August 8th returning on the 22nd. During that time Scott Dvorak will be overseeing the Commission work.

▪ **Farewell to Commissioner Anjali Bhagat**

Vice Chair Finrow announced that Commissioner Anjali Bhagat's personal and professional commitments in the next year have prompted her to resign from the Commission. Most notably, she will be getting married in the fall. He stated that it has been a pleasure working with her on the Commission and that her dedication, hard work and insightful analysis has been a benefit to the Commission and to the City. He stated that in the future, as things settle down for her, she hopes to reapply to the Commission to serve one more term – and we would welcome that.

Project Updates

▪ **Downtown Zoning**

Commissioner Tom Eanes provided a recap of the Commission's briefing to the City Council UDP Committee yesterday, Wednesday, July 27th on the Downtown Zoning Changes proposal. He reported that Commissioner Jerry Finrow delivered the Commission position on the proposal. He noted that Councilmembers didn't have a lot of questions in return but that Councilmember Steinbrueck pointed out that the proposed zoning changes were only the beginning of efforts to make downtown a better place to live and work. Commissioner Eanes reported the Councilmember Steinbrueck asked the Commission to think about livability issues not addressed by zoning and to be involved in the larger effort of improving the quality of life downtown.

Commissioner John Owen suggested that we send a brief letter saying that we appreciated Councilmember Steinbrueck's comments and that we would like to meet with him to follow up on his request. Commissioner Eanes pointed out that on August 8th the two planners from Vancouver that were hired by City Council will be presenting their finding to them and that it will be interesting to hear what they have to say on this matter

Commissioner Mimi Sheridan mentioned that the rural TDR program was brought up in the UDP briefing as well. Councilmember Richard Conlin asked us to follow up on that issue as well. Commissioner Owen indicated that he thought this would be an interesting issue to follow up on. Commissioner Sheridan added that she understood that the current program is expiring and needs to be renewed, even rethought – especially in context of how it runs up against the housing bonuses and such in the new downtown zoning proposal. Commissioner Owen said that he heard the program wasn't working very well Commissioner Eanes said that he believes it has only been used for one project and that the current program is focused on too narrow of an area. He stated that there is no reason why the concept couldn't be expanded to a larger area. Commissioner Finrow suggested that Commission staff follow up on this topic and report back to the group.

Commissioner Eanes concluded his report by noting that at the UDP briefing the Commission made the point that we thought that the proposal was good and we are looking forward to it passing after many years of study and public input, Councilmember Steinbrueck indicated that he was certain that it would pass, but that there may be some changes to it before it did. Commissioner

Finrow suggested that Commission staff should look in to that statement to find out if Councilmember Steinbrueck has anything in particular in mind, in terms of potential changes.

ACTION: Commissioner Finrow proposed and there was consensus for the following action on the Downtown Zoning Proposal.

- **The Planning Commission will write a letter to Councilmember Steinbrueck and the Council UDP committee stating interest in his request for Planning Commission recommendation and comments about what other issues of livability, beyond height and density, need to be addressed in our thinking about downtown and Center City.**
- **The letter should also state that the Planning Commission would like to meet with Councilmember Steinbrueck ASAP to get further clarification, share initial ideas and get feedback on the Commissions assessment and analysis of the neighborhood plans and Comp Plan for the Center City Strategy.**
- **Proceed with the request from committee to further explore the Transfer of Development Credits incentive program allowing for increased height for residential use in the Denny Triangle in exchange for preserving rural lands in King County and contributing to neighborhood amenities.**
- **Proceed with the request from Councilmember Godden Request from to make recommendations about how Seattle can “preserve and enhance its unique character”.**
- **Contact Councilmember Steinbrueck regarding potential changes to the proposal.**

▪ **Industrial Lands Study**

Commissioner Fiori reported that the draft of the August 1st Industrial Lands Study being produced by Laura Lutz of OED and Tom Hauger of DPD appeared to be exactly what it said it would be – a background study of current conditions. He suggested that as it is, it makes a strong case for needing more industrial land in the future and reveals that statistics show the growth expected in industrial space may be impeded by the limited supply of land.

He also reported that Commissioners Fiori, Krizanich, and Blomberg met with Councilmember Peter Steinbrueck, Sung Yang of the Mayor’s Office, Geri Beardsley of Council Central Staff and others last week. He stated that at that meeting, we reiterated many of the items we have discussed in the past mainly that the study is a great first step but that a comprehensive study is needed. Commissioner Fiori stated that Councilmember Steinbrueck was agreeable to that idea although he is concerned about it turning in to a long, drawn out process and that he would like to see a clear rationale developed for a strategy and would like to see data supporting it. Commissioner Fiori reported that Councilmember Steinbrueck stated would like to see the Planning Commission help the City lay out a process and to show that it won’t be a three year project.

Ms. Wilson pointed out that Councilmember Steinbrueck was supportive of the Planning Commission holding a roundtable in the early fall and he liked the idea of getting some outside

thinking on this topic. She reiterated that he would like to see a scope of work over the next year, but the roundtable in early fall would be useful.

Councilmember Sheridan mentioned that Tom Hauger presented some information on the Industrial Lands Study to the South Downtown Advisory Group*. Commission Analyst Scott Dvorak recommended that everyone in the group read the study noting that there were some interesting, relevant information to their work. Mr. Dvorak noted that the focus of many people on the advisory group seems to be to rezone industrial property to other uses – it would be good for them to see what's in the report and put their requests in context of the larger City's needs. Commissioner Sheridan reported that last evening the Advisory Group spoke about the Chinatown-ID neighborhood and there were numerous references to converting industrial land to mixed use and residential and it seemed clear some people were quite interested in converting industrial land to other uses.

Vice Chair Finrow asked whether the Land Use and Transportation Committee was going to track this project. Commissioner Blomberg indicated that they are and that they will continue to report to the full Commission.

* Note: Commissioner Mimi Sheridan is the Seattle Planning Commission's official designee to the South Downtown Advisory Group.

▪ **Northgate Housing**

Commissioner Sheridan reported that she and Commissioner Finrow have been working with Kristian Kofoed of the Department of Planning and Development in developing an outreach strategy for the Northgate Housing Analysis. Commissioner Sheridan further noted that she is conducting interviews with developers and interested parties around Northgate. She reported that so far they have interviewed people affiliated with the Mullally's, Lorig, and Sy Iffert and they will be interviewing Kevin Wallace this afternoon as well as many others scheduled. She noted that it has been interesting to get their perspectives on when to risk moving forward with a development noting that Mullally, for instance, has traditionally done residential development in the past, but now seems interested in doing mixed use. She noted however that he would need a rezone for their property. She also observed that most issues seem to be market and economic driven rather than code related. Commissioner Sheridan reported that Kristian Kofoed will write up the results of the interviews a couple of weeks after they are completed.

▪ **Monorail**

Commissioner Sheridan reported that she attended a meeting at the Seattle Monorail Project (SMP) last night as Co Chair of the City's Monorail Review Panel*. She stated that SMP invited several members of Seattle's design community to hear a presentation by Cascadia on their design proposals and intention for including the community in design review when the project moves forward. She noted that aside from the obvious big question of if or when the project would move forward, she felt the presentation was good and that Cascadia appeared to take the inclusion of sufficient time to conduct design review. She reported that the Monorail Review Panel's primary questions were 1) what is the current design proposal, 2) how flexible is it, 3) what will it cost. Fluor, the lead company of the Cascadia group, outlined a two year design process starting with the guideway and then moving to each station. There would be three levels of review and the inclusion of a public meeting for each element. They intend to provide a cost estimate for their proposal along with some options

and related costs for those options as part of their early presentations, highlighting tradeoffs. It was a good conversation. It was the first time we had to speak directly with them.

Commissioner Eanes added that he was also at the meeting as an observer. He felt he had a different take on the presentation. He feels that the contract provides Fluor/Cascadia with too many opportunities to pass change orders on to SMP. That the contract is written such that only the bare minimum is covered and that most everything else we would want to see on the guideway or in the stations would constitute a change order. The contract does not provide a large enough pot of money to handle the change orders – currently only about 2% of the budget – and that money needs to be reserved for so many competing items. The contract calls for such a minimal station it's hard to understand what could be traded off. There are simply insufficient funds to cover anything. This is something we will really need to pay close attention to as the design process moves forward.

* Note: Commissioners Mimi Sheridan, Anjali Bhagat and former Commissioner Paul Tomita are the Seattle Planning Commission's official designees to the Monorail Review Panel.

▪ **Multi Family Code Rewrite**

Scott Dvorak reminded the Commissioners about the upcoming Multi Family Code Rewrite Focus Groups which will be held from August 9th through August 18th. He reported that there will be six meetings – two downtown for developers and designers, and four in the neighborhoods for neighborhood representatives. He noted that the invitees have been identified and invitations have gone out. And that the Planning Commission has been asked to participate in opening each meeting and then participate in the discussion. He noted that a moderator will be on hand to facilitate the discussion and that there will be a notetaker as well. He further noted that the Commissioners will then be asked to later represent the group at a recap meeting in September. He reported that we have Commissioners signed up for each of the six meetings.

COMMISSION BRIEFING

2005 Comprehensive Plan Amendments

Tom Hauger of DPD presented the Mayor's Recommendations for Comprehensive Plan Amendments in 2005. Mr. Hauger handed out draft summary of the recommendations along with a copy of the current version of the ordinance that will be forwarded to City Council. He proceeded with his briefing by going over the draft summary.

With regard to Item A – Terminal 91, Commissioner Fiori wondered about the Port's intention to cluster their office space in larger buildings. He stated his concern that it may undermine the intent of the industrial zoning and therefore require a Comp Plan amendment after all – even though the Executive is recommending a Comp Plan amendment not be considered and not needed for the Port's project. Commissioner Sheridan wondered what was meant by office use, she asked if it meant an accessory type of a use, or as offices like those downtown and asked if the use have to be related to an industrial use adjacent to or nearby.

Commissioner Fiori said that he understands the intent of the Port to be to encourage a diversity of uses in order to balance their development risk. He noted that the Port has identified research and development as one of those uses and that it might look like office to the lay person, but it has

different requirements. Commissioner Sheridan concurred that this is a good point and something the Commission will need to look in to and understand.

Commissioner Mahlon Clements asked for a point of clarification. His understanding is that the Executive is deciding not to proceed with a Comp Plan amendment, but is willing to consider an overlay in North Bay. Commissioner Fiori replied that is correct but pointed out that there will be a City process in order to develop, approve, and adopt such an overlay and in the meantime an industrial land study will have been produced and possibly an industrial lands strategy underway that would inform such a process.

Ms. Wilson reiterated Commissioner Fiori's point that the Commission should consider the intent of the overlay. She noted that if it alters the character of property to the extent that some are suggesting perhaps a Comp Plan amendment should be necessary. Commissioner Fiori pointed out that the key word is "may" and proposed that this is something the Commission needs to understand and carefully consider when thinking about whether a Comp Plan amendment should be recommended or not.

Mr. Hauger pointed out that the Port wants this issue resolved in 2005, whether it is a Comp Plan amendment or an overlay. But given City Council's schedule in reviewing these items and that this is a budget year, that is a very ambitious schedule.

With regard to Item B – Amendments associated with proposed Commercial Code changes, Commissioner Sheridan pointed out that these proposals are the type that often have unintended consequences.

With regard to Item I – Proposal to designate an area at Dravus Street and 15th Avenue West as a Hub Urban Village., Commissioner Clements stated that his understanding is that the Executive is recommending that that request not be considered since the area does not meet the criteria for a Hub Urban Village or even a Residential Urban Village. Mr. Hauger replied that his understanding is correct and that the Executive is not recommending the proposal.

Commissioner Finrow wondered if anyone had any major objections to any of the items.

Commissioner Owen thought that it would take some time to really read through the proposals and then put together an email any thoughts.

Commissioner Blomberg pointed out that the Land Use and Transportation Committee had several issues with parts of B, C and E. E seems like an issue that we should be neutral on since it involves something (the Wallingford Neighborhood Plan) which we have not weighed in on recently.

Director Wilson pointed out that - clarifying the role of the Transportation Strategic Plan in the Comprehensive Plan is an item recommended by the Planning Commission last year. The Commission should pay specific attention to this item.

Commissioner George Blomberg wondered when City Council was expecting to hear from us on these recommendations – what should the timing of our response be? Rebecca Herzfeld of Council Central Staff said that there will be meetings on September 14th and 21st and that the Commission's comments should arrive before then – sometime around the 7th, 8th, or 9th in order to be included in consideration as the City Council deliberates.

Director Wilson pointed out that normally the Commission's process would be for the Executive Committee to decide whether we agree or disagree with the Mayor's office recommendation and then provided comments as to why we support their decision or don't.

Commissioner Finrow asked Commissioner Blomberg as Chair of the Land Use and Transportation Committee to draft the Commission's response letter and send around to the Commission for our review and comment. The initial content of the letter will be built around our response to the recommendations from last week, at this meeting, and any comments received by Commissioner Blomberg or Barb Wilson or Scott Dvorak over the next week. The letter could then be sent to the Executive Committee for their first review and then to the Full Commission. We could conduct a process of review and comment through the month of August and prepare a letter for final adoption at the Commission's September 8 meeting.

ACTION: Commissioner George Blomberg along with Commission staff will create the first draft of the Planning Commission's response to the Mayor's 2005 Comprehensive Plan change recommendations. The letter will then be sent to Commissioner's for review in August with the ultimate deadline of final approval at the Commission's September 8th meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Vice Chair Finrow asked for public comment.

Ben Farrow introduced himself as a candidate who applied for the Commission's 2005-2006 Get Engaged member of the Commission. He simply was attending the meeting to become more familiar with the Commission.

John Owen mentioned that he had attended a ULI forum yesterday morning on the topic of creating an urban environmental agenda. One of the topics at this forum was densification of existing urban areas and pointed out how our DADU work fits in to that. Councilmember Nick Licata was there and Mr. Owen had a chance to speak with him about that subject specifically bringing up DADUs and how it could be part of an urban environmental agenda. Councilmember Licata agreed with that thought and said he would be willing to discuss it further with him, particularly when it was pointed out that several communities in Seattle have specifically requested that their communities be allowed to have DADUs. It is a topic that is prime for discussion.

ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chair Finrow adjourned the meeting at 9:00 a.m.